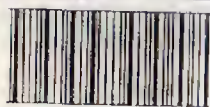


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S PAMPHLET No. 127

KEEPING UP

WITH TEEN-AGERS

BY EVELYN MILLIS DUVALL



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Times Have Changed

Grandma may have been quite a girl in the gay nineties. Mother weathered the first World War and was part of the "flapper age" that followed. Yet both Grandma and Mother, and the men they married, often find it hard to keep up with the pace that is being set by their young people today.

Times are changing so fast that each generation lives in a world that is only partially known to the one that precedes it or the one that follows. Understanding these shifts, what they are, what they mean, and how they affect the thinking and behavior of the people who live through them, is one span in bridging the generations today.

This pamphlet has been prepared cooperatively with the National Council on Family Relations and is one of a series of Public Affairs Pamphlets on personal problems and family life.

Evelyn Millis Duvall, Ph.D., is Executive Secretary of the National Council on Family Relations and is the author of another Public Affairs Pamphlet, No. 113, *Building Your Marriage*.

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS

YOUNG people are always "going to the dogs" in a sense. Some differences between the parent generation and young people are only natural. These differences are recognized by members of each generation in the familiar way each justifies its position by discrediting the other. Hence, young people for many generations have referred to their elders as "old fogies" who "don't under-



stand," are "old-fashioned," and "out-of-date." Similarly, the elder generation has continued through the years to express its concern over the follies of youth in such terms as "flaming youth," "the lost generation," "irresponsible," and "headed for trouble."

Although there are similarities that are striking, it is the contrasts between the members of the two generations that attract our attention and create friction. In a number of ways youth and their elders tend to be different.

Youth Tends to Be Daring

Young people, particularly the teen-age youth with which this pamphlet is concerned, are naturally inexperienced in many areas of life. They have not yet faced the difficulties to be met in carrying out life plans. They have not yet been hurt by the failures that teach a certain amount of caution. Youth has not

learned what it cannot do. It often has not even learned what is impossible—and so upon occasion tries to do even that! Out of inexperience and a desire to do and to be, youth dares where more experienced elders may quail. Youth must find out for itself. Youth learns, as have the oldest, by doing, or at least trying. And much of the world's progress has been achieved by young people who do things which the older generation held to be impossible.

Youth Enjoys Exploring

Research findings tend to back up the popular opinion that American young people love to be "on the go." An evening of fun usually consists of "going out," "going places," or "doing the town." Travel stood at the top of the list of postwar wishes as revealed by a recent study of teen-age girls. Family disputes over nights out, use of the family car, and "chasing around" are common reflections of the tendency of youth to wander and of parents to protest.

The tendency of youth to explore is seen in many forms besides running around. Young people go in for exploratory jaunts in the realm of ideas too. Youth tends to try out various philosophies in ways that often distress their more settled elders. The new president of Vassar College recently felt it necessary to reassure parents that sending a girl to college isn't going to send her back a Communist or "home to picket Dad's factory."

Challenges Taboos

The exploration of new moral and social standards is even more generally deplored by parents who wonder what's to become of these young folks who so openly challenge the conventions and break with traditional taboos. It is true that many young people are experimenting with some things that Grandma, or even Mother, did not do. Things that "no nice girl would think of doing" then are common practice now—to take slacks, smoking, lipstick, and the open discussion of sex as only a few examples.



Young People Try to Be Like Each Other

✓ Young people naturally try to be like other young people. Youth is constantly trying to be like, look like, sound like, and act like each other. Parents often find this hard to accept. Yet it represents an identification with one's own generation that is part of growing up. It may be hard for parents to realize that a snip of a girl friend wields more influence with Junior than all the elders of the family. Today's "jive talk" that translates only for the youthful the meanings of "slick chick," "in the groove," "deg to biffer," and all the rest of the code "slanguage" is meant to set youth off by itself and keep the parents out. ✓ Yet these same parents in their youth coined such nonsense as "twenty-three skidoo," the now generally understood "flapper," "speakeasy," and "drag a weed" that mystified their elders and unified youth in their time.

Youth Takes Modern Inventions and Standards for Granted

Today's young people have grown up in a world of wonders. Yet, because they have known nothing else, they take them for granted. Modern youth has ridden about town in automobiles since baby days. Young people have been lulled to sleep by radios all their lives. They are used to fresh fruits all year round. They accept talking movies as a matter of course. They spend more money in a week than their grandparents had in a month. They

identify types of airplanes that were but a madman's dream a generation ago. Just so, in Father's youth, young men were at home with gadgets and inventions still strange and awe-inspiring to their fathers.

Where Youth Is Daring . . . Parents Tend to Be Cautious

Parents have lived long enough to know the dangers that lurk behind many attractive undertakings. They have failed often enough to avoid the impossible. They have been hurt often enough to keep away from painful experiences. They tend not only to be cautious themselves but also to caution youth to be careful. A parent who has been hurt himself has learned to avoid being hurt in that place again, and as a parent, he tries to warn his children against making the same mistake. Of course, he is not always successful, for youth must learn for itself, but being a parent, he tries.

Where Youth Is Explorative . . . Parents Tend to Be Conservative

Not all parents stay home in the evening, or wear their rubbers, or vote the straight ticket without question. But some of them do. By the time a person is old enough to have children, he is ready to settle down and to protect his holdings. Most parents of forty, more or less, have been around enough to be able to enjoy a quiet evening at home as much or perhaps a bit more than an evening on the town. Old tried and true favorites are more often desired than taking a chance on the unknown. And this goes for political theories, for new models of cars, new vacation spots, or styles of hairdo. Parents have sampled and made choices. They frequently prefer to retain an old garment that fits and feels comfortable rather than to run the risks and inconveniences of new cloaks of strange hues and styling.

It is not just a matter of comfort. Parents have responsibilities that must be met. They have children who must be cared for. They have property that must be protected, resources that must

be retained, interests that must be safeguarded, and values that are worth fighting for. This is the basis for the conservatism of the older generation in economics, politics, and in morals, too.

In some instances the roles are reversed: parents want their young people to venture forth while the adolescent from time to time fears the responsibilities of growing up and seeks the security of childish dependence. He then may be extremely conservative while his parents are progressive.

Where Youth Seeks Its Own Age . . .

Parents Remain Interested in Their Children

When parents have looked after a youngster for sixteen or eighteen years, they don't suddenly stop being interested. They can't. Safeguarding a child through all the perils of modern living, nursing him through illnesses, keeping him well, looking out for his education, his social growth, his spiritual welfare, and his emotional well-being through the years necessarily entangles them. Though they try to avoid being too possessive, they are involved with their children and continue to cherish them.

Youth is winsome in its own right. Even if the life of a middle-aged man or woman has not been devoted to youth through parenthood, his attention is constantly being turned in that direction. The milliner gushes about how "youthful the hat is on madame." The tailor tells Dad that the new topcoat makes him look like a youth from the back. The Hollywood starlet reminds Mrs. Fortynish that her figure is beginning to bulge and that wrinkles appear where firm lines once were. This accent on youth is not only one of appearance. It is smart to "have young ideas," to "keep young in spirit," and to "get young blood into the organization" at every age. The successful man "carries his years easily." The attractive woman "does not look her age." A mother is complimented if she is told that she looks like her daughter's sister. A man is pleased if he is mistaken for his youngster's boy friend. The widespread effort of parents to keep young tends to make them try to hold on to their children at the very time when youth is striving to be independent.

CHANGING TIMES WIDEN THE GAP

IN 1890 when Grandma was a girl, 65 per cent of Americans still lived in rural communities. She probably was a country girl, brought up in simple ways. As a girl she never went far from home. Her first automobile ride was still many years off. She didn't know much about the people in the rest of the world. She filled her time with sewing and embroidery and the many other tasks that kept women in the home. When she married, she donned a role of housewifery as definite and as comfortable for her as her apron. She knew that her place was in the home. There wasn't any question about it. There were very few alternatives. She either married and made her own home, or, remaining unmarried, went to live with one of her married brothers or sisters. As long as they lived on farms she was welcome, for she could help. But as people moved in larger and larger numbers to cities, many other changes began to take place.

Living in Cities Is Different

The process of becoming city-dwellers means more than just moving in from the country. The ways of life must change to fit the new situation. The whole complex of change that occurs is known as *urbanization*, or the process of becoming "citized."

Grandma never got far enough away from home to escape its controls. Wherever she went she was recognized as a member of her family, of whom certain behavior was expected and a certain decorum anticipated. As she walked down the country road or the village street the neighbors would nod as they recognized her as "one of the Jones girls, the one who sings in the Methodist choir and goes with Jim White—you know, the one who helps his father at the shop. . . ." Even when she and Jim went out for a drive they never got so far away from home that someone would not recognize them or at least spot the horse! Couples had to be pretty careful under such neighborly surveillance.

Fewer Controls

But the closer you live to other families the less well you know them. Country people living a mile or more away from their nearest neighbors often know them much more intimately than do city families separated only by the thickness of a wall. It is not at all unusual for families to share an apartment house for many months or even years and never know each other even by name. A personal interest in the neighbors, their goings and comings, their activities, their friends, their possessions, and their children, though usual among rural families, is rare in the city.

This brings a certain anonymity to the city-dweller. He may be sick or well, good or bad, wise or foolish, but so long as he doesn't disturb his neighbors, they are unaware of him. The influence wielded by Mrs. Grundy and her cohorts who watched the goings and comings of the townsfolk from behind the lace curtains and swapped tidbits of gossip over the teacups is passing. She doesn't know her urban neighbors well enough to judge them. And she probably isn't home enough herself to keep track of them any more!

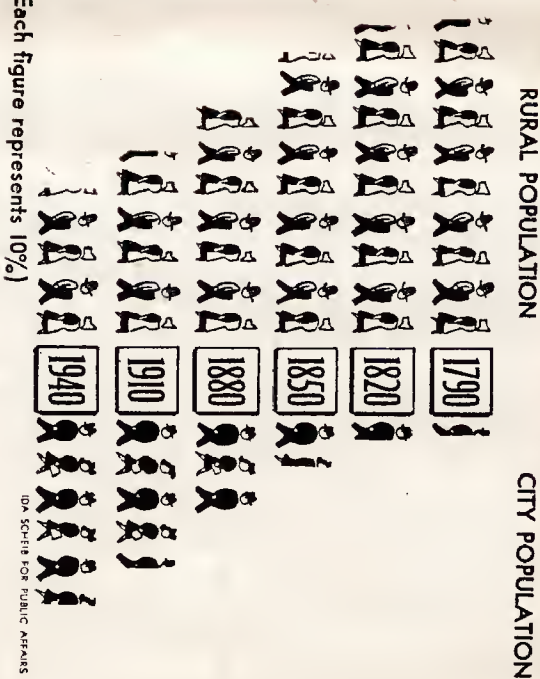
City young people are free from such external controls almost from the minute they leave the front door. In ten minutes they can be far enough away from home so that there is not much chance of their seeing anyone they know. What standards they live up to, come from within themselves. As long as they do not interfere with the jostling throng, they may do as they wish, go where they will, and behave as their own standards and upbringing determine.

Cities Contain Amazing Variety

The task of living up to one's own standards is made difficult because cities are made up of many races, nationalities, and creeds. Each city-dweller comes originally from a little group in which members closely resemble each other in their habits, interests, and way of life. Each person brings these ways to the city and adapts them over a period of time to his new setting.

For instance, the Newberrys moving into the big city from rural New England come with a rich heritage of Sabbath observance, Bible reading, and temperance born of years of staunch adherence to puritanical tradition. Their children attend school and go about with young people whose parents migrated from

THE POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES IS SHIFTING FROM RURAL AREAS TO CITIES



southern Europe. These Italian children have had wine from their baby days. They are astounded at the Newberry young people who are not allowed to touch any kind of liquor. The Newberrys are shaken by the casual acceptance of alcoholic beverages by their children's friends, while the Italian parents are equally shocked that the Newberrys would withhold food to punish their children. Both sets of parents shake their heads and wonder what the world is coming to, while their youngsters, rubbing elbows with so many different little worlds, are having to weigh and discard or retain patterns of living that their parents took for granted.

These differences affect many areas of life. Within the acquaintance of most city young people are others of their generation who think and act quite differently in such matters as the getting and spending of money, the preparation and eating of food, courtship and marriage, and the bearing and rearing of children. We could go on and include such others as the having of a good time, the accumulation of property, the participation in group life, the intimacy of contact with others, the attitude toward strangers and casual contacts, the meaning of religion, of democracy, and of life itself. Each youth is brought up in the way of life of his parents. As soon as he is old enough to make friends outside the family circle, he finds that many of the ways he has always considered "right" are not taken seriously by some others. Behavior that is forbidden in one group is condoned or even encouraged in a second. The "right" is not absolute but relative to the time and the place and the people.

Bewildering Choices

Grandpa's opportunities were limited. He had but few possibilities from which to choose. If he did not choose to be a farmer in rural America he could go into a trade or go to the city to try his lot. Rarely was he trained for any particular vocation. He grew up and took over whatever he laid his hand to. Recreationally Grandpa was restricted by the demands of his farm work, and bounded by the opportunities available through the church, the Grange, and the general store. He never dreamed of the forty-hour week, of hobbies, of bowling teams, or taking his girl to a movie twenty miles away, or of grown men spending all afternoon following a ball around a golf course. He wooed his girl with the simple arts and pleasures that were used by all the other youths of town, and when he married he settled down to a way of life that allowed few possibilities and provided few choices. But when he or his sons moved to town, things opened up.

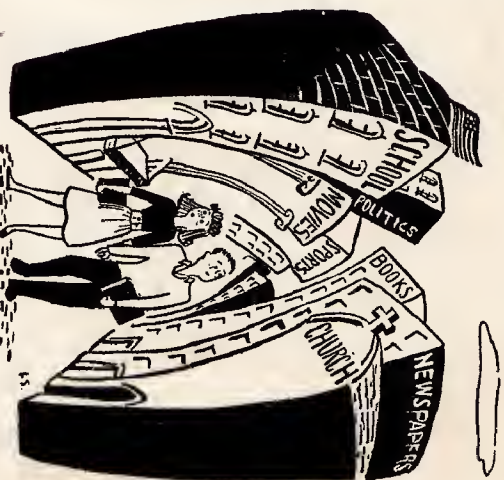
The 338 vocations in 1870 have expanded to more than 20,000,* largely as a result of industrialization. The young man or

**Occupational Dictionary*, U. S. Department of Labor, 1940.

woman today faces literally thousands of vocational possibilities for which he or she may train and become adept. The son is no longer expected to follow in his father's footsteps. The girl may marry or not, have children or not, work or not, at whatever she pleases, in a way that would have been unheard of in her mother's or her grandmother's day.

Recreational opportunities have similarly increased. The automobile has widened our young people's playground to take in many square miles never known to the older generation. Electric lights, night shifts, and commercial amusements have kept places open far into the night where but a generation ago, "they took in everything but the sidewalks at ten o'clock at night." Today's youth have not only the home, church, and school activities that absorbed their parents' leisure time, but in addition a host of others in sports, the arts, crafts, music, drama, museums, books, and the world of wonders that the radio brings.

Personally the choices are many and confusing. Out of the variety of opportunities open to youth comes the problem of wise choice not only of where to go and what to do, but even of what to be. Roles are no longer rigid and definite. Who is a good girl? A good woman? A good mother? A good boy, man, father? Few of us have a clear understanding of just what is expected of us. This is especially true of youth who have grown up in the welter and bewilderment of the city's opportunities with few established patterns to guide them. Grandma did not have as many possibilities but she did not have to struggle through the confusion



that her granddaughter does. The variety of experience provided by city living opens avenues for the fulfillment and development of personality that are encouraging in the growth of a democracy. The challenge is being met by the hundreds of thousands of young people who select out of the baffling array of possibilities those which are to be a way of life for them.

HOW TO REDUCE CONFLICT

JUST what all this means in the lives of parents and young people can be seen in the everyday conflicts that are common in the modern family. As we look at them one by one, let us keep in mind the background factors we have been discussing and anticipate the ways in which these conflicts between the generations can be reduced.

Getting in at All Hours

"All hours" in Grandma's day was "too late for any nice girl to be out." The pattern was set in part by the family's bedtime, which was governed by father's having to milk the cows at five in the morning, by the coal-oil lamp and the wood-burning stove, and by the fact that the neighbors faced the same realities. Respectable people went to bed early, were up early, and allowed few irregularities.

Mother and Dad were brought up by Grandma and Grandpa and were imbued with the same ideas. They departed far enough away from their parents to cause some anxiety, but they were quite unprepared for the widespread staying-up-late that is prevalent now in many communities.

Quite wholesome activities as well as the more sordid sort now attract youth beyond the time which some parents feel is proper. Clubs, sports, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., churches, scouts, as well as the more acceptable forms of commercial entertainment gear their programs to the hours when young people are free. The problem brings up several specific questions whose answers hold the clue to the general solution of the time conflict.

What About School Nights?

Parents and young people agree that the hour for getting in on school nights should be earlier and more strictly observed than may be necessary for week-end evenings out. The practical problem of getting up the next morning in time for school brings up the question of adequate sleep. Just how much sleep a teen-ager needs depends to some extent upon the person, of course. But it is generally agreed that young people should have at least eight hours sleep a night. Adding the time necessary for dressing, washing, collecting the day's equipment, and getting an adequate breakfast before dashing off for school at eight or eight-thirty the next morning means, by simple arithmetic, that bedtime should be in the neighborhood of ten or eleven o'clock at the latest. Special factors (some sixteen-year-olds need more sleep than others), specific health requirements, travel time to school, and responsibilities at home in the morning often necessitate an even earlier bedtime on school nights.

Some parents doubt the advisability of allowing young people out at all on school nights. They point to the strenuousness and length of the school day and to the fact that evenings are the only time available for doing homework, practicing music, carrying out hobby interests, being with the family, and getting the general relaxation that many teen-agers need more than they realize.

High-school young people, on the other hand, are often involved in the attractive and important activities of community centers, teen-canteens, clubs, play practice, school sports, and church functions. The occasional chance for a "coke date" or an early show or a walk to a friend's house is too tempting to be refused even when school keeps as usual next morning.

The answer seems to lie not in some magic moment when all youth should be in, but rather in a mutual recognition, by youth and parents alike, of the various factors involved. Granted that the parents' concern about sleep and homework cannot be ignored, and that young people have social obligations and op-

portunities which must sometimes take them out on school nights, a family understanding should not be too hard to reach.

How Late Is Too Late?

On Friday and Saturday evenings when the problems of homework and sleep are not so pressing, the question of a reasonable time for getting in still remains. Parents often are anxious about their young folks' being out in the late hours because of the evil influences which exploit these hours. They fear the dope peddlers, the liquor sellers, the unsavory agents of houses of ill repute, the sex "morons," and gangsters, whose influence may have been somewhat exaggerated by the press. Parents may often question the judgment of some young people in handling the powerful combinations of fast cars, casual drinking, and intimate unchaperoned contact between the sexes. Even when they trust their own son and daughter, they are not so sure of some of their casual acquaintances. Plagued by such fears, parents tend to set hours for getting in at night that often seem too early to the young people who see it all quite differently.

Teen-age youth enjoys being out at night. Going out with other young people in the evening is exciting, exhilarating, and important for one's status. When a party is in full swing, or when the gang sets out for one more spot before going home, the average young person hates to have to be "a wet blanket" and "kill the party." His or her reputation as a good sport is at stake. Many affairs last longer than anticipated and so many a young person is faced with the problem of sticking it out and braving his parents, or ditching it and suffering the ridicule of his contemporaries. It is not surprising that many young people take a chance on the understanding of their parents rather than that of the gang. But it does complicate the parent-youth relationship and calls for some joint acceptance of just what is involved. For instance—

1. Where is the affair?
2. Who is going?

3. What is going to happen?
4. How soon is it expected to be over?
5. How is the return trip home to be made?
6. Can the parents be notified if the hour is to be later than expected, or if their help is needed?

When parents and their young people have mutual confidence in each other such questions as these can be discussed beforehand with the result that the parents are reassured enough so that they don't pace the floor as the hour grows late, and the young people are free to have a good time without fear of the fate that awaits them as soon as they get home. Young people who can share with their parents enough of what happens when they are out, what makes them late from time to time, and how they themselves feel about it, help their parents to the real understanding of youth's world that they need and want. Parents who aren't too rigid are often able to build up in their teen-agers a sense of responsibility and the ability to take care of themselves whenever they are. It is unfortunate that the question becomes such an issue in so many homes. For there are still other problems that should have fully as much attention. And the mutual trust that is so essential is too often marred by bickering over the time for getting in at night.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

"WHEN I was your age," says Grandpa, "I was earning my own living and paying board at home. I worked hard for every cent I had. We knew the value of a dollar in those days. Knew how to work, too. We didn't have time for all the tomfoolery that you young sprouts fritter away your time with. . . ." It's an old story familiar to most homes. Youth may close his ears and shrug it off as "old stuff," but the fact remains that Grandpa's comparisons of the past with the present are pertinent.

Generally speaking, the older generations did take more responsibility in their youth than young people do today. They

worked a longer day for less money. They had less leisure. They took care of what they had, not only because thrift was a recognized virtue, but also because replacement was so much more difficult. Industrialization has shortened the working day, prolonged the school years of youth, put more money in everyone's pockets, and supplied goods in quantities and varieties undreamed of by Grandpa or even by Mother and Father. Times have brought changes in the responsibilities that youth is expected to assume.

Opportunities for Spending Money

Most young people today have more money to spend than their parents had at their age. They have more to spend it on, too. What many teen-agers spend for malted milks, soft drinks, and movies in a week would have covered the necessities of life for a lad of the same age some years ago. But it should be remembered that it is not youth that has brought the milk bars, the corner drugstores, the movies, the privilege of schooling, and the money itself into such easy access. All that is the product of their parents' and grandparents' success in making industry yield more of the world's goods than could have been accomplished in a simple agricultural society. So the problem will not be met by criticizing young people for having more money, or by restricting their use of it, but rather by helping them to assume responsibility for what they have in the world in which they live.

How Much Money Should a Teen-ager Have?

Teen-age young people today have two sources of money. One is their own earnings. In boom times, it is not uncommon for some teen-age boys to earn as much as do their fathers. That situation does not often prevail. But in most communities there continue to be opportunities for an enterprising boy or girl to earn money. Does that money belong to the young person to spend as he wants without supervision? What if he doesn't spend it wisely? Does he owe some of it to his parents? Should he be expected to use his own earnings for such items as clothing, club

dues, sports equipment, or dental bills which his parents would otherwise be expected to pay?

Are parents justified in demanding their legal right to all the earnings of their minor children? Should youth be required to save at least part of all that is earned? A recent study of 7,000 high-school pupils showed that two-fifths of the quarrels between adolescents and their parents were over just such questions.

Developing a Money Sense

These are perplexing questions for which each family must find its own best answer. The current practice is for young people to spend their own earnings with some guidance from their parents. Many parents—but unfortunately not all—give their children as much freedom as they can take responsibility for. The youngster who has learned how to earn, to spend, and to save money is usually allowed more freedom than a child who has had little experience in the getting and the spending of it. Most parents recognize that their children learn by experience and that some mistakes in judgment in the use of money are to be expected. So they tend not to be too severe in restricting a child's spending of his earnings unless the child shows signs of being in trouble or in need of more direct supervision. Few parents even in the lower income brackets take possession of the entire earnings of a child, although some encourage their young people to take increasing responsibilities for their own needs as they grow older.

The allowance system, under which the parents give a stipulated sum to each of their children at regular intervals to take care of the child's personal expenses, is becoming general practice. Just how much the allowance should be is a frequent question. It can be determined by considering such factors as:

1. For what does the child need money? (Dues, carfare, lunches, etc.)
2. Just what is the allowance expected to cover? (Clothing, movies, books, etc.)

3. How much previous experience has the child had with money?
4. What will the family budget allow easily?
5. What are the other children of the same age among his friends getting?

Once an allowance is agreed upon, it is up to the young person to be responsible for it. If he cannot make it cover his expenses without frequent loans and supplements, the whole situation should be reviewed. When he shows by his increasing ability to handle his money wisely and by his eagerness for more freedom in spending it that he is ready for more responsibility, that too can be jointly recognized.

On Taking Care of Things

Parents find it difficult to understand youth's carelessness in losing mittens, rubbers, school books, and other needed articles. Replacements are too frequent and too costly to be ignored. Why don't young people take more responsibility for their things? Parents ask.

Responsibility for the care of personal and family property is another aspect of this problem that frequently troubles parents. Young people are accused of leaving their belongings scattered about the house, of keeping messy dresser drawers and jumbled rooms, of a general drop-it-and-leave-it attitude around the home that mothers find exasperating.

Another complaint is the way youth tends to leave equipment commonly used by the rest of the family. The ring in the bathtub, the sink full of dirty dishes, the dents in the fender of the family car are only three of the hot-spots of family discord that arise from the tendency of young people to be more irresponsible than parents feel is necessary.

Schools, drugstores, libraries, movie houses, and other public places frequented by teen-age young people complain similarly of mutilated seats, defaced walls, and disfigured equipment. What does all this destructiveness mean? Is youth incorrigibly irrespon-

sible of property rights? What does youth have to say for itself? First of all, we must recognize that even while such practices as we have been discussing may be common enough to evoke continued and wide-

spread criticism, *many* young people are not irresponsible. A great many young people do take care of their things, do respect the property rights of others both within and outside the home, and do assume a real and conscientious responsibility that exceeds that of many adults.



Let's turn the question around then, and instead of asking "Why don't young people take more responsibility?" let's ask, "Why do some young folk assume as much responsibility as they do?" The answer now is not hard. Evidence points clearly to the fact that people, young and old alike, take as much responsibility as is really theirs.

Occasionally young people refuse to take responsibility simply because they are afraid of it, and of growing up. Those children fortunate enough to have had graduated opportunities for more and more responsibility as they develop are often less fearful of growing up than those who are suddenly plunged into adult responsibilities.

Responsibility Must Be Given Before It's Taken

The "smothering" mother who hovers nearby to remind son or daughter to find his school books, to hang up pajamas, or to scrub out the tub, as often as not ends up by doing the job herself. Philip Wylie has caustically denounced this "Momism" as one

of the factors undermining our culture. Without being as hard on Mom as that, we can see that the mother who takes responsibility for her own life in ways that are satisfying, and leaves her children free to assume increasing responsibility for theirs, provides a wholesome atmosphere for growth in responsibility through the years.

The son or daughter whose room is his to do with as he will has a better chance of learning to take care of it. If he is free to choose how it will be furnished and equipped, if he is free to bring his friends to it without question, if he can leave his projects undisturbed when he goes out, he will feel that it is his own and keep it in a way that satisfies him and that meets the standards that he has learned at home.

Running Their Own Affairs

Young people who plan and build their own recreation centers and have the responsibility of running them thereafter have no difficulty in protecting the property. Young people who are made to feel at home in school, with student controls and activities planned by and for students, take pride in "their school" and protect it with enthusiastic care. Churches have found that young people assume more reverence when more appreciative respect is shown them through participation in youth choirs, youth services, and other programs geared to meet their needs and interests. Even drugstores have learned that a management which expects young customers to make trouble often elicits it, while friendly, permissive service evokes the warm camaraderie and good sportsmanship that protects property and tempers alike.

That is what we should expect. Adult hostility toward youth inevitably kindles feelings of resentment. Youth's destructiveness often stems from feeling neglected, ignored, left-out, and perpetually criticized. As more and more communities have accepted the younger generation with appreciation and respect, young people have responded with enthusiastic cooperation. Youth will take as much responsibility as is really theirs now as always.

Work to Be Done

Leisure time may have increased since Father was a boy, but there is still work to be done. Young people are expected to do their school work, including that which is called "homework." They are expected to practice their music lessons. Many of them are expected to do their share of the work that must be done around the house. Parents and teachers spend a great deal of time seeing that youth does these several types of work, not only because they must be done, but also because it is felt that youth must be taught responsibility for such things.

Studies in education indicate that young people do their school work to the extent that:

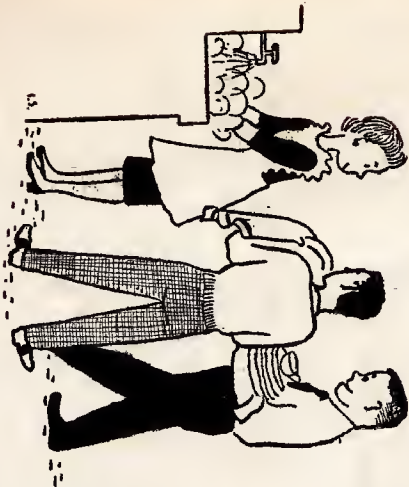
1. It makes sense to them.
2. It is neither too difficult nor too easy.
3. It provides them with an avenue of participation and growth.
4. It is taught by teachers who command their admiration and respect.

The older ideas that prevailed when Mother and Father were young are passing rapidly. Few young people are compelled to take Latin just because it is supposed to be good mental discipline. Teachers no longer enforce rigid discipline by show of force. Work is not handed out blindly with no concern for the student's readiness or aptitude. Yet teachers too are human. From time to time they teach as they were taught rather than *what* they were taught about education. Classes are crowded. Teachers are underpaid. So many young people find school boring, stuffy, too difficult, too impersonal, too meaningless to command their attention. They play hooky (as their fathers did), or they slide along, taking little interest and less responsibility. In those schools where the studies are designed to meet the needs, interests, readiness, and purposes of the students, there is much less difficulty about getting the work done. American youth responds to challenging opportunities for growth in school and out, today as in the past.

Music lessons are often a burden. As long as they are taken primarily to satisfy a mother's wishes rather than because the youngster himself wants a musical education, we can expect only a lukewarm interest. In those homes where music flows as a language of parents and children alike, the young people take to it as a part of living. It takes an unusual interest or exceptional aptitude to keep an active teen-ager at work on Bach when the gang goes in for jive and the rest of the family doesn't know one note from another. Culture is caught, not taught.

The Daily Chores

Washing and wiping the dishes, taking care of the baby, carrying out the ashes, and the other day-by-day jobs to be done around the house are no more interesting to young people than they are to the adults of the household. The young people who



take their share of these responsibilities are usually those who (1) feel that they have a real stake in the family, (2) know that their efforts will be noticed and appreciated, (3) recognize that the others in the family are pulling their share of the load too, and (4) are free to do the jobs themselves in their own way without

too close "snooper vision." This doesn't mean that parents should not guide youth, but there are ways of doing this and ways that should be avoided. Parents who keep a string on all the household responsibilities, laying down minute instructions for what is to be done, and how, and checking up frequently with criticisms for every departure from their formulas, often are disappointed that their young people don't take more responsibility. Too often they

don't because it isn't offered to them. When young people have the feeling that they are working along *with* adults on common tasks of their life together, they have shown that they can and do assume responsibility as readily as do adults.

FRIENDS AND FAMILIARITY

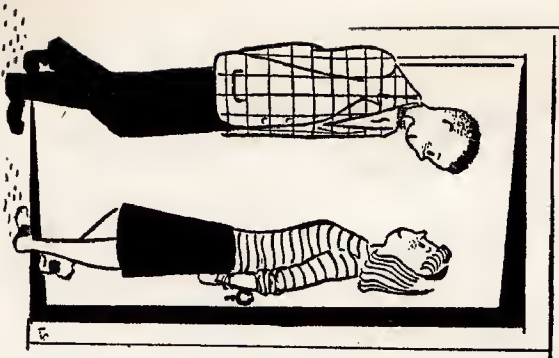
MR. CRAIG hitched his chair closer to the fireplace and smiled pensively. "There's no question about it," he began, "young people today are a lot freer than we were in our time. Why, only last Sunday we drove over to see some old friends we haven't seen in a long while. These friends have an attractive daughter who is a little younger than our son. And do you know, he walked right up to her, kissed her in front of all of us, grinned at her folks, and said 'Hi, folks,' as easily as you please. He couldn't have seen the girl more than five or six times in his whole life before. Funny thing was she didn't seem to resent it. Her folks didn't appear shocked. And I confess that it didn't seem too wrong to me at the time. It was only after I got to thinking about it and remembering how shy and reserved I used to be with girls that I realized what had happened. Times sure are changing—and fast." His laugh was a little embarrassed, and puzzled, too.

This excerpt from a recent conversation contains the central fact of the changes in relations with people that have occurred within the past twenty years. The trend has been increasingly toward more informality, more easily expressed interest, and more spontaneous expression of affection. The wolf whistle at the corner, the breezy salutation, the more casual kiss, and the open interest in the other sex represent marked shifts from the formal greetings, the furtive hand-holding, and sentimental pining of yesteryear. A metropolitan audience of high-school students hooted at the tender, mature exchange of affection depicted in the movie, *Madame Curie*. Compared with such restraint as that portrayed between the Curies, modern youth is indeed free. Young people rarely think of themselves as *free* in their relations with others. They are far more often burdened with ques-

tions for which they have no answers. All around them are many, many people behaving in a vast variety of ways. The modern high school exposes every youth to many patterns of behavior that are new to him. Ruling groups make some types of behavior seem "smart," and those that struggle to belong follow along. Few young people want to be labeled "sissies" or "babies" and so try to appear as sophisticated as the next one. This makes for a considerable amount of "faking," of "putting on a false front" to cover the uncertainty and confusion just below the surface.

Kiss on the First Date?

Groups of girls discussing familiarities with boys often agree that they don't believe that a girl should let a boy kiss her on the first date because (1) she shouldn't seem too eager or easy, (2)



she wants to be sure she likes the boy before she kisses him, and (3) kisses should mean more than just a "goodnight." Yet it is not unusual for these same girls to admit that they don't know what to do if the boy tries!

Boys discussing the same question say that the chief reason why they try to kiss the girl on the first date is that she seems to expect it. Some of them are afraid that she will think he doesn't like her, or that he doesn't dare, if he doesn't "make a pass." It is the exceptional boy or girl who is sure of what is expected and how to act. The standards of mother's day are passing, and the new codes are often too confusing and confused to be helpful.

The new standards are being forged in actual practice and in the truth sessions that follow with other young people and with

sympathetic adults. In some circles, girls are beginning to find out what girls always have to discover—that they can set the pace in their relations with boys. One girls' club recently concluded a series of discussions on boy friends with this summary developed by the girls themselves:

As Girls See It

1. You can let a boy know you like him without being too familiar.
2. Boys who want to play "wolf" are neither funny nor flattering.
3. Keeping friendly and interesting is the best way to avoid a "situation."
4. Goodnights that linger are asking for trouble.
5. You don't have to pet to be popular.
6. Real affection is too fine to play with.

Other young people and some adults may not agree with these conclusions. But for this group of girls, they meant much in assurance and poise. Talking over common confusions, discovering that others face the same questions, and developing a set of common understandings is always helpful.

How Far Should You Go?

Even for the young person who does not wish to be promiscuous, or go in for sex and love play, there is still the question today of how familiar you should be with your loved one before your marriage.

The older controls, represented by the couplet that made the rounds of autograph books:

Don't kiss beside the garden gate;
Love may be blind, the neighbors ain't—

no longer hold in many circles today. Display of affection is often quite public and open in many communities.

The older threats of pregnancy and disease have been lessened by birth control and penicillin. Studies show that increasing num-

bers of couples have had intercourse before marriage. But some research and clinical findings also indicate that happiness in marriage is related to continence before marriage. There is evidence that complete freedom between the sexes is conducive neither to their physical and mental health nor to the success of their marriages. A sex code, based on the world of today, has yet to be developed.

Grandma capitalized on her innocence. Mother cherished her virginity as a requisite for marrying well. Both were protected by their fathers and older brothers from "the fate worse than death" until they were safely married. Today's young men and women face the larger responsibility of defining their roles for themselves. Too often they receive guidance that is too little and too late, and must react impulsively to demands and pressures for which they are quite unprepared. It is for this reason that resources in education and counseling are being developed today. The example of a happy, unfrustrated marriage, with frank discussion of the emotional and physical aspects of sex, is the most useful contribution that parents can give their children in this field.

WHAT WILL HELP?

WHEN times change so fast that the ways of one generation are not suitable for the next, confusion and conflict are inevitable. No one is at fault. The problem is to develop the knowledges, skills, and values that will be helpful in the new situation. Here the older generation is no more experienced than the younger, and no less. The problems are, in a sense, new ones, demanding the intelligent attention of both generations.

Bridging the Gap

Getting through to each other across the barrier of age is often difficult, but is important for mutual understanding of common problems. Some parents and young people are able to talk freely and frankly with each other about anything that concerns them. They are usually in the families that through the years have en-

couraged each person to speak for himself without threat of punishment or suppression. This is a two-way process. Parents must be willing to see their children as individuals in their own right. Young people must be able to view their parents as real persons as well as parents. Mutual respect and genuine affection are needed for understanding each other. The process is long. When the gap between the generations is as great as it is today, it takes a while for each to understand the other.

What Parents Can Do

Parents can speed up the process by studying teen-age development and adjustment. Many excellent books are available. Parent education classes and discussion groups are helpful. Keeping up with the times by activities in the larger community keep parents alive to some of the current issues and pressures being met by their young people, and diminish the tendency to cling possessively to youth.

It is important for parents to be emotionally independent themselves in order to let their young people go. Parents who have kept alive their own interests, who find life full and satisfying, are much less apt to hang on to their developing youngsters than are the mothers and dads whose whole lives are wrapped up in their children. "Weaning" at adolescence is a two-way process often-times as difficult for parents as it is for their young people. Wise parents anticipate this development and plan for interests that will fill the gap left by growing children.

What Young People Can Do

Young people learn a great deal from discussion of their common problems with each other and with cooperative adults. Classes in family relationships, boy-girl relations, preparation for marriage, and effective living, are offered in thousands of high schools and in hundreds of colleges. Y.M.C.A.'s, Y.W.C.A.'s, churches, and other young people's organizations provide a wide variety of informal educational and recreational opportunities. These can be started by the demand of youth as well as by intelli-

WHAT WILL HELP

Getting through to each other across the barrier of age



Parent education classes and discussion groups



Classes for young people—educational and recreational groups



Books and other materials



Individual counseling



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gent adults. Books and materials for such discussions are appearing in larger quantity and in better quality than ever before. It is up to youth as well as the leaders who work with them to tap the resources at hand.

Forums, panel discussions, and group counseling procedures are promising methods in this field. Panels of boys and girls often fruitfully discuss such topics as "What does a boy expect of a girl on a date?" "What does a girl expect of a boy?" etc. Panels of parents and young people open up for discussion such questions as "How early should a teen-ager be in from a date?" "What should a schoolgirl be expected to do around the house?" and "Should parents continue the allowance of married teen-agers?" Such programs usually are most effective under the direction of a trained and skilful leader.

Counseling

Individual counseling is coming into its own. Some industries recognize that the efficiency of their workers is increased as counselors help them work out their personal and family as well as work problems. Marriage and family counseling centers are being used in many communities across the country by increasing numbers of troubled couples and parents. School counselors and guidance personnel belong now to a recognized professional group. Many of the personal problems brought to these various counseling services stem from the changing social scene we have been discussing. People everywhere are beginning to recognize that it is as foolish to live indefinitely with a cultural or emotional distress, without trying to ease it, as it would be to tolerate an aching tooth without attention. Counseling facilities are becoming widely acceptable and offer promising assistance to old and young.

The world moves on. The days that Grandfather knew are no more. Times have changed since Mother was a girl. We cannot go back. We must live in the present, working out today's problems as best we can. Tomorrow's world will depend to a great extent upon our ability to solve the transitional problems of one generation to another. That is the challenge that faces us all.

FOR FURTHER READING

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First Edition, March, 1947

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